DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 701 CG 022 282

AUTHOR	Sprik, Jeanette
TITLE	Counseling and Guidance Software. Highlights: An ERIC/CAPS Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, Ann Arbor, Mich.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	90
CONTRACT	RI88062011
NOTE	3p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC/CAPS, 2108 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Computer Software; *Computer Software Reviews; Computer Uses in Education; *Counseling; *Counseling Services; Educational Technology; Expert Systems; Information Systems
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest describes the "Counseling Software Guide" (Walz and Bleuer, 1989). It summarizes the contents of the guide: (1) general information about the use of computers in counseling; (2) practical guidelines on what to look for in software; (3) an overview of trends and developments in availability and use of software; (4) an overview of the range of software programs available on a particular topic; and (5) information on specific software programs. (TE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HIGHLIGHTS ...An ERIC/CAPS Digest

ED315701
CG022282

Counseling and Guidance Software

Introduction

Computer-enhanced counseling programs offer exciting possibilities in this age of the Information Revolution. While technology continues to leap forward, research literature indicates a gap in resources addressing counselors' computer-relevant needs (Walz & Bleuer, 1989). One critical need is for information about counseling software that is appropriate to the needs of clients and that performs as advertised.

To begin to address this need, the *Counseling Software Guide* (Walz & Bleuer, 1989) was developed. The Guide is a collaborative product of two years and three organizations that continue to provide significant leadership in promoting the use of computers in counseling and human services: the Career/Vocational Education and Guidance Department of the Santa Clara County, California, Office of Education; the ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services; and, the American Association for Counseling and Development. The wealth of information contained in this 492-page major reference includes: (I) general information about the use of computers in counseling, (2) practical guidelines on what to look for in software, (3) an overview of trends and developments in the availability and use of software, (4) an overview of the range of software programs available on a particular topic, and (5) information on specific software programs. The Guide includes these other unique features:

- Factual and up-to-date descriptions of over 500 counseling-relevant software programs.
- A large number (93) of intensive software reviews.
- A thorough discussion of how far we have come in the use of computers in counseling and what paths and options the future holds.

Resources in the Appendices include: a complete contact and program address list, a program list with user level and computer compatibility, a software evaluation checklist, and an index of reviewers and programs.

Software program topics include software for: (1) personal counseling, (2) career counseling, (3) academic advising, (4) testing, and (5) administration.

Characteristics of Ideal Counseling Software

Some of the most important characteristics of high quality programs include:

1. Detailed, accurate advice about hardware requirements (e.g., capacity, printer support, type of monitor) and clear instructions on how to install and/or start the program.
2. Compatibility with both IBM PC and the Apple series of computers.
3. Trial use and/or rental options.
4. Frequent revisions and updates provided at no, or minimal, cost to the purchaser.
5. Ability to complete the program, or at least stand-alone segments of it, within a 50-minute time period.
6. Attractive graphics (images and colors).
7. Features that capitalize on the interactive and user-involvement potential of the computer.
8. Ability to back up and change answers and move between sections.
9. Option for printed feedback and the ability to save information.
10. Minimal consequences of errors.

Guidelines for Selecting Software

One of the many ideas suggested in the Guide for selecting software is a simplified three-step process called the **SEP** Approach (**See**, Evaluate, and Plan). **See** the software for a cursory visual assessment to determine if further consideration is warranted; **Evaluate** the purpose, usefulness, appeal, and cost of the program for your clients; and **Plan** how the software can be incorporated into your program of services. If the software passes the **SEP** test, a professional trial/assessment of the contents is critical, with both counselors and clients.

Price generally parallels complexity and quality of programs; however, check on the company's return policy. If possible, preview the product through exhibitors at professional conventions. Consider also whether it is generative (i.e., allows the client to expand their consciousness to trigger growth) or limited and "canned." Will it enhance the quality of the counseling relationship, or will it interfere with research-proven qualities of counseling effectiveness?

Trends and Developments

Research. As need and implementation increase, further research will be needed on procedures and outcomes. Many program topics (e.g., personal counseling) need further development, matching technique with: (1) medium of presentation, (2) skills of the counselor constructing the materials, (3) training of counselors using the software, and (4) research on specific use of programs.

Quality. The extreme differences in both quality and potential effectiveness demands that the user be alert. Quality factors to signal include theoretical orientation,

Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse
2108 School of Education, The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259 (313) 764-9492

ERIC®

user manual and support, training needed, research, client interaction, technical problems and which need careful scrutiny by the potential user.

Ethical Standards. The integration of computer technology into counseling raises many potential problem areas and ethical issues. The revised AACD Ethical Standards provides ten guidelines for acceptable professional training and service delivery. Counselor educators and practicing counselors should examine their "boundaries of competence" to use computer technology ethically in their services to clients.

Innovations. A significant new development is the proliferation of software programs that are easily understood (e.g., Hypercard, which allows the counselor to focus on needs, not the program language). Voice activation programming will further enhance the trend toward user-friendliness, and with wider acceptance, the price will become more affordable.

Holistic, multidisciplinary computer applications will refine and interrelate the current domains of self-reporting, performance, and psycho-physiological measuring by the computer.

If counselors are to use computers effectively they will need a systematic strategy and comprehensive model for implementing computer applications in counseling and human development service delivery systems.

Progress toward interconnectivity, with all programs running on all machines, makes startling improvements each year, but is yet to be fully realized. Counselor generated programming is an important future step.

Counselors will creatively adapt marketed software to meet client needs.

Compact Disk-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) players and touch screens are looming on the periphery of counseling software, and many counselors now have access to the hardware necessary to run the programs.

Vertical markets (programs scaled for various levels of competencies) for special groups (e.g., at-risk youth, adult career-changers, the outplaced) will increase.

Future Trends

1. Greater attention will be paid to careful and systematic planning for the use of computers in counseling.
2. Various counseling functions will become increasingly interrelated as a result of the use of computers.
3. Counselors will increasingly demonstrate more imaginative and innovative uses of computers in counseling.
4. Counselors will make regular use of a centralized source of review and evaluation of counseling-relevant software. (Walz & Bleuer, 1989)

Summary

Counseling software programs have proliferated in recent years. Many programs are now duplicative, having been developed largely by technicians rather than counseling professionals. For example, more than a dozen resume-writing programs are currently available. Since good software programs are the result of a team effort, counselors, as users, should develop program ideas with technical staff to produce quality and relevant software. Kid Talk I, Career Finder, and College Finder are good examples of high quality counselor-generated programs which are appropriate to the needs of clients.

Wise counselors of the future will feign neither superiority nor disinterest in this age of the information revolution. They will, instead, proactively develop technological expertise and appropriate content for counseling software programs. Thus, they will contribute significantly to a broad repertoire of "high tech, high touch" effective counseling services, and narrow the gap between the potential of information technology, and available resources addressing counselors' computer-relevant needs.

References

Bridges, M. (1987). Resources to find and evaluate counseling software. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal, 3*(2), 34–42.

Harris-Bowlsbey, J. (1985). Systematic career guidance and computer-based systems. In Z. B. Leibowitz & H. D. Lea (Eds.), *Adult career development: Concepts, issues and practices* (pp. 95–107). Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

Harris-Bowlsbey, J. (1983). The computer and the decider. *The Counseling Psychologist, 11*, 9–14.

Heppner, M. J., & Johnston, J. A. (1985). Computerized career guidance and information systems: Guidelines for selection. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 26*, 156–163.

Katz, M. R., & Shatkin, L. (1983). Characteristics of computer-assisted guidance. *The Counseling Psychologist, 11*(4), 15–31.

Maze, M. (1985). How much should a computerized guidance program cost? *Journal of Career Development, 12*, 157–160.

Maze, M. (1984). How to select a computerized guidance system. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 63*, 158–161.

Riesenberg, B. (1984). Considerations in the selection of a computerized guidance system. In C. S. Johnson (Ed.), *Microcomputers and the school counselor* (pp. 17–29). Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Walz, G. R. (1987). The present and the future use of computers by counselors. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal, 3*(2), 4–7.

Walz, G. R., & Bleuer, J. C. (1989). *Counseling software guide*. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

Walz, G. R., & Bleuer, J. C. (1985). Putting the byte into career development. *Journal of Career Development, 12*(2), 187–198.

Jeanette Sprik, Ph.D.
Consultant, ERIC/CAPS

1990

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062011. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.